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Bulgarian Held in Papal Plot Loses 2d Appeal

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ROME, March 24 — A special court rejected a renewed appeal today for release from detention by a Bulgarian airline official accused of complicity in the attempt to kill Pope John Paul II in 1981.

Sergei I. Antonov, the Rome representative of the Bulgarian national airline, has been in investigative custody here since Nov. 25. He has been accused by Mehmet Ali Agca, the Turk serving a life sentence for shooting and gravely wounding the Pope, of having conspired with him to commit murder.

Immediately after Mr. Antonov was arrested on order of the investigating magistrate, Mario Martella, two lawyers engaged by the Bulgarian Em-

bassy here filed a motion for his release with the Tribunale Della Libertà, or Tribunal of Freedom, a special court that rules on the right to detain without entering into the merits of a case.

The lawyers, Giuseppe Consolo and Adolfo Larussa, presented witnesses who testified that Mr. Antonov was in the office at the moment when Mr. Agca fired his pistol in St. Peter's Square on May 13, 1981. The tribunal ruled Dec. 6 that, whatever the merits of that testimony, Mr. Agca had given a generally accurate description of the Antonov apartment to give weight to his assertion that he had been in contact with the Bulgarian and thus justify Mr. Antonov's continued imprisonment pending Judge Martella's investigation.

On appeal, Mr. Antonov's attorneys

sought to cast doubt on Mr. Agca's testimony about a visit to the Antonov apartment. Mr. Consolo said in a telephone interview that he and Mr. Larussa had offered evidence that on May 10, 1981, a day on which Mr. Agca had said he met Mrs. Antonov in the apartment, she had already left Rome for Bulgaria.

The court, Mr. Consolo said, declined to rule on that evidence and affirmed its ruling of Dec. 6. Mr. Consolo said the evidence on Mrs. Antonov's departure would be presented to Judge Martella.

Mr. Consolo said that under the provisions of the law that he considered applicable, Judge Martella could hold Mr. Antonov for more than two years before ruling whether the case against him was substantial enough to hand over to a trial court.